THE HOME CIRCLE

Polonius' Advice to His Son.*

Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar:
The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried;
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatched, unfledg'd comrade. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel; but being in,
Bear't that the opposer may beware of thee.
Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice;
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy.
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy:
For the apparel oft proclaims the man.—
Neither a borrower nor a lender be;
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all,—to thine own self be true;
It must follow, as the night the day.
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
—From Shakespeare's "Tragedy of Hamlet."

A Greeting to the New Year.

We are on the threshold of a new year. We do not know what the year holds for us, but we are not afraid of it. We have learned to look for kindness and goodness in all our paths, and so we go forward with glad hope and expectation.

It is always a serious thing to live. We can pass through any year but once. If we have lived negligently, we cannot return to amend what we have slurred over. We cannot correct mistakes, fill up blank spaces, erase lines we may be ashamed of, cut out pages unworthily filled. The irrevocableness of life ought alone to be motive enough for incessant watchfulness and diligence. Not a word we write can be changed. Nothing we do can be canceled.

Another element of seriousness in living is the influence of our life on other lives. We do not pass through the year alone; we are tied up with others in our homes, our friendships, our companionships, our associations, our occupations. We are always touching others and leaving impressions on them. Human lives are like the photographer's sensitized plates, receiving upon them the image of whatever passes before them. Our careless words drop and we think not where they fall, but the lightest of them lodges in some heart and leaves its blessings or its blight. All our acts, dispositions, and moods do something in the shaping and coloring of other lives.

It is said that every word whispered into the air starts vibrations which will quiver on and on forever. The same is true also of infleunces which go out from our lives in the commonest days—they will go on forever. This should make us most careful what we do, what we say, and what quality of life we give to the world. It would be sad, indeed, if we should set going unholy or hurtful influences, if we should touch even one life unwholesomely, if we should speak even a word which starts a soul toward death.—J. R. Miller, D. D.

*This is No. 89 of our series of the World's Best Poems, selected especially for The Progressive Farmer by the Editor. In this series selections from the following authors have already appeared: Burns, Bryant, Mr. and Mrs. Browning, Byron, Goldsmith, Holmes Kipling, Lanier, Longfellow, Lowell, Markham, Macaulay, Milton, Moore, Poe, Pope, Read, Riley, Ryan, Scott, and others.

THE WINTER WORLD.

Many Wild Things to See During a Tramp in the Woods.

Nothing could be more erroneous than this mistaken idea that desolation possesses the earth for the enduring of a Northern winter, says Country Life in America, Christmas Annual. Eyes have they, but they see not, these folk who talk of wintry wastes. Forgive them their error. Pity their ignorance.

Copse and field are not as barren of animal life as popularly supposed. On the contrary, a host of friends in fur and feathers will be met by one who invades their domain. And they are the easier to study now for the exposure of their ertswhile hidden retreats. Sir Reynard is to be met with almost any morning. Br'er Rabbit and Puss are easily traced to their forms, and their acquaintance made by design instead of mere chance. Along open brooks one sometimes meets that warm-coated but shy fellow, the mink. On the meadows mice make little runways under the snow, watched by the rough-legged hawk, the wariest of his tribe. Of the birds there are many—social chickadees, quiet, industrious brown creepers, noisy bluejays, Corvus the crow, cheerful and confiding tree sparrows from the North, snow buntings and gold finches banded together in community of interests where the grass seeds are most plentiful, hairy and downy woodpeckers policing the orchard trees, sober-hued juncos, golden-crowned kinglets in which the spark of life but burns the stronger as the cold strengthens, grouse and quail, our two noblest game birds, the two crossbills, the redpoll, the pine siskin, the herring gull—any or all of these and others, all in sober plumage one is likely to meet during a winter ramble, to give the lie to those who cry "The birds have flown." And even friends of June you may chance upon in warm sheltered swamps, a few hardy robins, waxwings, blackbirds and bluebirds.

Nor are the beasts and the birds all that the keen observer will find for his delight. Seemingly gone is the insect world, yet like the trees these winged creatures of softer days do but sleep. On bush and tree-twig and on stout weedstalks, under rough bits of bark, fastened to post and rail of old fences, and under the eaves of buildings are quaint and curiously woven cradles to be collected now for what they will bring forth when spring kisses the land and sets free all bonds. You who have eyes to see, go you forth even in the winter, for verily your reward will be great.

A DOSE OF BROWNING TONIC.

A Stimulus for "Keeping Eternally at It" and for Facing Defeat.

Most of us are in one way or another born cowards, and what we need more than anything else is to be made properly ashamed of ourselves. Hail, then, Robert Browning, the prophet of courage, courage in victory, courage in defeat, courage in the losing fight! This is, briefly, the message of Mary Baker Dunn, in a paper as sprightly as it is inspiring published in the current Atlantic. According to this writer Browning's chief virtue is that he makes one feel willing to blow horns and wave banners and lead forlorn hopes. A Browning notion of victory, however, does not with any nececessity whatever imply the getting what one wants. It often means just keeping eternally at it, and realizing that surrender is the only defeat:

"But what if I fail of my purpose here?
It is but to keep the nerves at strain,
To dry one's eyes and laugh at a fall,
And baffled, get up and begin again—
So the chase takes up one's life, that's all."

The Browning tonic which this writer would like to substitute for the proprietary medicines of the age does not inspire any man to be an angel before his time—it only stimulates him to be a man and master of himself:

"A man for aye removed
From the developed brute; a God though in the germ."

The tonic in question is not an expensive remedy except in the amount of effort required on the part of the patient to render it efficacious, but it is perhaps a little too bracing to be taken in large doses until the spirit of it has begun to steal into one's veins.

If, for instance, the young man should begin before breakfast in the morning with

"What have I on earth to do
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?"

follow it us at about the time of his after-breakfast pipe with

"I count life just a stuff,
To try the soul's strength on,"

manfully swallow an afternoon dose of

"When the fight begins within himself
A man's worth something"—

and substitute for his usual nightcap,

"Why comes temptation but for man to meet,
And master and make crouch beneath his foot.
And so be pedestaled in triumph?"

he might at first find such a sudden influx of red blood into his veins a little more than his system could bear, but, in due time, if the prescription were persevered in, he might learn to welcome the joy and the strength of the new elixir of life.

Persistency's Reward.

"Any man can marry any woman," Voltaire once cynically declared, "if he only pursues her long enough."

An amusing and characteristic story, illustrative of this, is told of Lord Beaconsfield in the days when he was wooing Mrs. Lewis, to whom in later years of married life he was so touchingly devoted:

One day Mrs. Lewis, who was then living in retirement at her seat in Glamorganshire, saw a gentleman walking leisurely up the drive. "Jane," she exclaimed to an old servant, "I really believe that horrid man Disraeli is coming up the drive. Do, please, run to the door and say I'm not at home."

Jane opened the door to the undesired caller and gravely announced her message. "I know," Disraeli coolly answered, "but take my bag to a bedroom and prepare luncheon. I will wait until Mrs. Lewis is ready to come down-stairs," which of course Mrs. Lewis felt compelled to do a few minutes later.

"Oh, dear, what can I do with such an obstinate man?" the widow asked desperately, later in the day, when Disraeli showed no sign of raising the siege. "Marry him, I suppose, ma'am," was Jane's philosophic answer; and, as the world knows the persistent wooer had his way in the end in this as in most other things in life.—The Pilgrim.

"He Believes in Me."

There is nothing which quite takes the place, in a boy's life, of the consciousness that somebody—his teacher, brother, sister, father, mother, or friend,—believes in him.

One of the most discouraging things to a youth who is apparently dull, yet is conscious of real power and ability to succeed, is to be depreciated by those around him, to feel that his parents and teachers do not understand him, that they look upon him as a probable failure.

When into the life of such a boy there comes the loving assurance that somebody has discovered him, has seen in him possibilities undreamed of by others, that moment there is born within him a new hope, a light that will never cease to be an inspiration and encouragement.

If you believe in a boy, if you see any real ability in him, (and every human being is born with ability to do some one thing well), tell him so; tell him that you believe he has the making of a man in him. Such assurance has often proved of greater advantage to a youth than cash capital.

There is inspiration in "He believes in me."—Success.

Mr. Daniel M. Coates is one of the best farmers in this section. This year he raised 29,724 pounds lint cotton, or a little over 74 bales, weighing 400 pounds each, on 70 acres of land on Mr. James H. Pou's "Hastings" plantation, one and a half miles south of Smithfield.—Smithfield Herald.